

Students' Food Review

El Escondido: Comida Mexicana

by Carlos Aranibar

Rating:



Address: 246 5th Ave. (off of Neil Ave.)

Phone #: (614)299-7445

Category: Relaxed dining for breakfast,
lunch, and dinner

Hours: 9am to 10pm daily

Non-smoking: throughout restaurant

Prices: mid to high range

Credit cards: no

It seems that around Columbus, everyone is always asking where they can find "authentic" Mexican food. There are some places that serve good food, others have good atmosphere, and others just serve inexpensive drinks to make mediocre food taste better. *El Escondido* Mexican Restaurant is as authentic as you are going to get this far away from the border. There are some points that could use improvement, but overall our dining experience was very enjoyable.

Erica and I visited *El Escondido* on a Tuesday evening. I wore a baseball cap to disguise myself from the restaurant/market's owner, Jesus Nuñez. The place is by no means an up-scale establishment, but that modesty is what makes it so warm and welcoming to those native to Latin America and the Southwestern United States. It is brightly lit, clean, and the dining furniture is well arranged. As I walked in, the first thing I noticed was the kitchen. It is on the right of the walkway that leads to the dining area, and displays the usual cooking equipment through a big pane of glass. It gives the entryway a behind-the-scenes feeling to our visit. At *El Escondido*, you seat yourself.

After sitting down, we were greeted by the only staff member that is not related to Mr. Nunez. She asked to bring us drinks, we indicated our preference, and asked for a side order of chips and salsa. To drink, I ordered *horchata*, a sweet rice drink and Erica ordered a Coke. We were surprised to see that the Coke came in the old-fashioned bottle straight from Mexico with Spanish labeling. Not only was the look different, according to Erica, "Mexican Coke tastes better." The chips and salsa (\$2.30) were promptly brought to the table. The flavorful salsa was good, but I prefer chunky salsa, like *pico de gallo* with my chips. This mild blend of spices was more like the salsa found in bottles of *Tapatio*, but better tasting. I also have to point out that the chips resembled Tostito's brand tortilla chips you can buy in any market. It was then time to decide on our main course.

The menu was basic, but it covered all of the traditional dishes. There was a long list of egg combinations for breakfast including *huevos rancheros*, *huevos con chorizo*, and *huevos con jamón*. The list of entrees had a wide variety. I settled on an old

stand-by, *un burrito mojado* (\$4.99). *Burrito Mojado* translates to "wet burrito", named for the method of serving the burrito smothered in chili sauce. It was served with a side of shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes and sour cream. This burrito was HUGE! Imagine Chipotle burritos with more meat, more beans, no rice, and a warm chili sauce covering. As soon as I saw it, I knew I would have trouble clearing my plate. I also ordered a *tostada de pollo* (\$1.99), a flat, fried tortilla with shredded chicken, lettuce, and sour cream on top. The burrito was great. It had lots of meat and beans on the inside. Unfortunately, that's all it had. It lacked rice and the lettuce and tomato needed to be placed on the burrito as I ate. Some of you might prefer the dressings on the side, but I like having everything wrapped up together. I think the reason for serving the dressings on the side is because of the chili sauce poured over the burrito; this prevents the lettuce from losing its crispiness and the tomatoes from losing their freshness. The *tostada* was good, as well. The helping of moist, seasoned shredded chicken was generous.

Erica had the *flautas de pollo* (\$5.99), or flutes. These are commonly known as *taquitos*. The combination included sides of beans and fluffy rice. Erica really liked the whole dish. There was only one slight flaw pointed out: the beans. Although Erica reports that they were good, they tasted canned. I sampled one of the *flautas* and I thought the *tortilla* might have been a little over-cooked. Other than that, it was very tasty. The same seasoned chicken on the *tostada* was in the *flautas*. If you decide to order this selection, we recommend pouring some of the salsa over your *flautas*. It gives it that extra kick. Also, you can order a side of *guacamole*, a common topping for *flautas*, for \$2.99 a serving.

A nice, relaxed environment and excellent food were the highlights of this visit to *El Escondido*. The prices for some entrees did seem to be a little on the expensive side and a couple of details, like the store-bought chips, could use some attention. I recommend this restaurant to everyone. I will be returning again on my own, as its close proximity to campus makes it easy to just pop in and grab a quick lunch. While you are there, you can also buy some groceries for home. *El Escondido* carries Goya products, corn *tortillas*, and *Jumex* juices. They also offer a very wide variety of spices and herbs for any home-made dinner.

